



Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT DECISION NOTICE

Big Spring Creek Channel Restoration Project

Region 4
4600 Giant Springs Road
Great Falls MT 59405-0901
November 13, 2014

Proposed Action

Montana Fish, Wildlife, & Parks proposes to restore Big Spring Creek downstream of Highway 191. The proposed section of creek was straightened in 1961, resulting in channel instability, down-cutting, lateral bank erosion, and flooding downstream. A new channel with connected floodplain and a natural riffle/pool meander pattern is proposed for construction. Channel length would increase by approximately 60% to 3,200 feet from the current 2,000 feet.

Montana Environmental Policy Act

FWP is required by the Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) to assess potential impacts of its proposed actions to the human and physical environments. In compliance with FWP's 2002 MEPA Public Involvement Policy, an Environmental Assessment was prepared by FWP for the proposed project and released on September 19, 2014 for public comment. The draft EA was titled: Big Spring Creek Channel Restoration Project. The draft EA was circulated to local sporting groups and was also posted and remains available for viewing on the FWP webpage: <http://fwp.mt.gov/news/publicNotices>. Additionally, FWP hosted a public scoping meeting on September 24, 2014 to present information regarding the NRCS engineering design and to receive public input on the proposed action.

Summary of Public Comment and FWP Response

The public meeting was attended by 25 members of the public. Formal comments were received by 2 attendees, both of which were in favor of the proposed action. During the public meeting, a few attendees expressed concerns as to the impacts of the proposed project to upstream channel stability. It was explained that the project is not expected to have any impacts to upstream channel stability due to grade control structures included in the engineered plans and the presence of the Highway 191 Bridge which would act as a


point of both grade control and flow restriction. These control points on the creek would prevent any unexpected channel instability in the restoration section from migrating and impacting upstream or downstream landowners.

Six comments were received during the public comment period which ended on October 18, 2014. Five comments were submitted via email and 1 comment was submitted via written letter. All comments were supportive of the Proposed Action. No new information, concerns, or objections arose during the public comment period.

Decision

Based on the Environmental Assessment, public comment, and FWP evaluation, it is my decision to proceed with the proposed restoration project on Big Spring Creek.

I find there to be no significant impacts to the human and physical environments associated with this project. Public comments received during the comment period showed general support for the proposed action. Therefore, I conclude that the Environmental Assessment is the appropriate level of analysis, and that an Environmental Impact Statement is not required.


Gary Bertelotti
FWP Region 4 Supervisor